

SECTION

Resources for Communicating About Mental Health in the Workplace



V. RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

This section of the resource has two purposes: (1) to describe the importance of internal communication with employees about their business's own mental health-friendly policies and stimulating awareness and interest among employees, and (2) to introduce the ready-to-use communication tools that are a part of this resource.

Communication with employees is as important and feasible for the very small business as for the Fortune 500 company. Communication channels within a business—formal and informal, from bulletin boards to all-hands meetings and publications—should be employed to inform and educate all employees about mental health and mental illnesses. They also should inform employees about how stigma and discrimination toward persons with mental illnesses may keep someone from seeking help. Further, employees need to be made aware of the pain they may inflict on others when they use thoughtless, stigmatizing language or behaviors, even language or behaviors used in jest.

Opportunities for Internal Communication with Employees

There are frequent opportunities to weave information about mental health-friendly policies and resources into routine communication and special workplace events.

- New employee orientation can include an EAP representative. Give an employee a chance for a one-on-one meeting or have the representative do a full group presentation about mental health in the workplace and stigma and discrimination reduction.
- Add information to e-mail signatures with an intriguing statement like “Get the facts about mental health, visit www.allmentalhealth.samhsa.gov.” E-mail also can be an effective way to disseminate messages. Articles or other discussions of mental health can be disseminated to employees periodically via company e-mail. Again, the anonymity this offers might be very comforting to employees. Web site resources are suggested in Appendix B of this resource.
- Another way to point employees to the EBI web site is to create a link or banner button on an Intranet that takes them to more information

about mental illnesses. The drop-in articles or public service announcements included with this resource also can be used as content on an Intranet.

- Paycheck envelopes can carry messages—tips for holiday stress reduction, a notice of health screenings, and/or reminders of how to contact the company EAP.
- A health and wellness day or health fair is a great way to introduce the importance of mental health. The event can include mental health screenings, one-on-one meetings with a mental health professional or representative from the EAP, and self-care workshops. Be sure to add a mental health information desk to existing health and wellness fairs.
- Celebrate National Mental Health Awareness Month in May and Mental Illness Awareness Week in October, as well as other special events throughout the year. Several Web sites maintain special events calendars and provide useful downloadable materials for such events. Check out the Web sites of the national mental health organizations listed in Appendix B. Invite a speaker from the local department of health or other organization to speak to the staff about mental health and distribute information about mental health services in the area.
- Institute training for supervisors about mental illnesses and how to supervise in ways that promote mental health and decrease stigma and discrimination toward employees with mental illnesses. Again, ask guest speakers to discuss different strategies for promoting a workplace that does not discriminate against people with mental illnesses.

Communication Tools that Accompany This Resource

Included with this resource is a CD-ROM that contains several “ready-made” communication products that can quickly be put to use. They are described in this section along with suggestions for using them.

Drop-in Articles

A drop-in article is a ready-made article or story that can be inserted into a newsletter or transformed into Web site or Intranet content. The articles typically begin with a vignette, focus on key issues and facts, and conclude with



a message summary. It is hoped that these stories will inspire more locally developed commentaries and success stories from the Mental Health-Friendly Workplace.

The articles appear on the CD as both PDF and Microsoft Word files. The Word files can be modified to include a special message (i.e., contact information for your EAP), or they can be cut-and-pasted into a specified layout.

Print PSAs in Various Sizes

Also on the CD are sample public service announcements (PSAs) in various sizes for in-house distribution to employees through printed materials that are normally circulated, like newsletters and payroll stuffers. They also can be printed and hung throughout the workplace on bulletin boards. These print ads echo the workplace poster (below) and let employees know that the poster in the break room is more than just decoration. These ads have a simple message and direct employees to a Web site, www.allmentalhealth.samhsa.gov, for followup information. The 8 1/2" x 11" flier-size ad can be customized with a tagline that announces an upcoming event such as a mental health screening, a supervisor training, Mental Health Month, or a speaker from a local mental health organization.



Poster

Also included with this resource is a workplace poster. The poster is designed to give employees an overview of how they can contribute to a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace. Hang the poster in a common area to show managerial support of a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace dynamic. It is assumed that an employee, alone in a break room or at the photocopier, will pause and reflect on his or her role in breaking the stigma and discrimination that surrounds mental illness within the work group. The poster reinforces how an employee with a mental illness can look to his or her employer for support. The poster also directs the employee to a Web site, www.allmentalhealth.samhsa.gov, for more information.





Web Site

The Web site for this initiative, www.allmentalhealth.samhsa.gov, is another tool available for circulation. The Web site is designed for people with little or no knowledge about mental health issues. After seeing the Web address on a poster or at the end of an interesting article, people can go to the site to learn more. Here, they will find myths and facts about mental illnesses, descriptions of mental illnesses, resources for more information about mental illnesses (including other Federal resource pages), State mental health resource pages, and real stories about persons living with mental illnesses. There is also an interactive tool where visitors can find mental health services in their community, as well as order a copy of a brochure about mental health.

A Web site is a unique way that employees can seek more information about mental illnesses privately and anonymously. For that reason, it makes sense to let employees know about the site. The URL is listed on all of the materials that come with this workplace package.



MENTAL
HEALTH

it's part of our workplace